

OUT OF THE DARKNESS

(Continued from Last Week)

"Let's consider Mr. Slyke's death for a moment," Bartley continued. After the party was over, Slyke offered to sell him some whisky. They had a drink, then Lawrence went home. But we found three cases, showing that someone besides Lawrence had drunk with Slyke. Let us say this third person killed Slyke. Understand me: I do not believe that when he came, he had any intention of killing him—that came later. We all assume that Slyke and this third person went upon the balcony, for that reason I cannot say, but I am sure that Slyke was the one that suggested going there. No murderer could have selected it, voluntarily, a place in which to kill his victim. He paused for a second, then continued: "After Slyke had been killed, he thought occurred to the murderer that it was possible to make his death look like suicide. He undressed the body in the room above the bedroom, and later carried his clothing downstairs, placing it on a chair beside the bed. But he overlooked a stocking that had fallen on the floor behind the door of the room above. Criminals, no matter how shrewd, always make some mistake that betrays them; this person drew the bedclothes up around Slyke's neck. It had not done that, I doubt if he would ever have suspected that Slyke was murdered. The shot took effect once. It would have been impossible for him to have drawn the bedclothes up around his own neck, and he had his hands by his side before he died."

The doctor's voice sounded perplexed as he said, "But, Mr. Bartley, this is all a rather fine-spun theory." "I expected that someone would say that," Bartley smiled. "It is more in an unsupported theory. However, let us proceed. The murderer went down to the living room and fought back with him two cards, which he threw on the floor of the room where the glasses were. If this suicide was questioned, then finding of the cards would throw suspicion on the members of the card party."

"He was a pretty cool hand," Black erupted. "Yes, he was cool enough. He went upstairs into the room where the case was—"

"But—" Roche commenced. "Bartley did not let him finish. "Yes, now. The dog should have barked. The reason he did not was because a man was no stranger to him."

The doctor spoke once more, "But you have not proved any of these things are so; you are just supposing."

"No," came the answer, "I have not, but let us consider some of the points that have been proved. Slyke tried to telephone several times during the night and failed to get his party through."

Roche and Black were astonished. This was the first time they had heard anything about the telephone call.

When he failed again and again to get the person he wanted," Bartley continued, "he asked central to try to locate him for him. All calls in here go through the Saratoga exchange, and it was very easy to find whom he wanted. But that is not all. On a magazine found on the table beside the whisky glasses were a number of little circles drawn with pencil, circles that ran into each other."

What has that to do with it?" Black, voicing his wonder. "A great deal. Those same circles are on the handle of the knife with which Briffeur was killed. I have also little pieces of paper with similar circles drawn on it, and I know the person who drew them: It has been proved scientifically that if a person is playing with a pencil and begins to draw figures unthinkingly on anything, his subconscious mind will trick him into always drawing the same design. I found the circles on the magazine in Slyke's room, on the knife that killed Briffeur, and again on the pieces of paper. I know to whom they belonged, and I know also a person who saw the murderer enter the house to call on Slyke the night he was killed."

"He leaned forward breathlessly to hear his words, which came with a cutting edge, as he added crisply: "Now, knowing all this, don't you think the person that drew the circles, that was telephoned to, that was seen going into Slyke's, has something to explain? Don't you think so, for King?"

There was no answer, and Bartley asked sternly, "Doctor King, you are not going to deny, are you, that you killed those two men?"

The question was so unexpected that I sat stunned. He was the last person I should have suspected. Currie said, "My G—d, John," and fell silent. The doctor's face had gone a dead white, and he sank limply back in his chair. Without raising his eyes, he stammered, scarcely above a whisper, the words drawn from him against his will, "No—no—I killed both."

The next instant he realized what he had said and half rose from his chair, then fell back, clapping his hands in his hands. I could not believe my ears. That Bartley should

suspect the doctor of the murders seemed incredible enough; but that the doctor himself should admit that it was true was beyond belief. Roche looked first at the doctor, then at Bartley, his eyes bulging with astonishment. Black alone seemed to realize all that the doctor's admission entailed. Currie was still too dazed to understand, for King had been a good friend of his.

Bartley broke the silence with, "We have proved that the doctor is the guilty party. He himself has admitted it. I have suspected him for some time, but when he gave that cry as Slyke's figure appeared, I knew that I was right."

The doctor was still sitting with his head in his hands, and Bartley glanced down at him pityingly before he continued to the rest of us. "From the first, I suspected that whoever had killed Slyke had some knowledge of medicine. The average layman would not have known how to place the revolver in Slyke's hand in such a way that it would appear to be suicide. The point that puzzled me was that the eyes were almost closed. If the guilty person knew enough to place the revolver in Slyke's hand before it stiffened, he should have known that the eyes ought to be open. Miss Potter explained this discrepancy by saying that she had closed the eyes herself, frightened by their stare. Then I was baffled. True, there were the circles on the magazine, but I did not know who made them and there seemed no way of finding out. Then one day, while I was in the doctor's office, he kept drawing little figures on a pad before him as he talked. When he was called to the phone, I took out the piece of paper on which he had been drawing and had carefully thrown it into a waste-paper basket as he passed. On it were the same figures that I had found on the magazine cover. Even then I was slow to believe he could be the murderer, though science had proved that a person always draws the same design. I found the same symbols on the knife handle. There was but one way he could have been killed."

"My G—d, how!" Roche gasped out. "The knife blow came from the front. You who sat next to the chauffeur heard nothing. No one could have crept up on him without making some sound. Therefore the knife had to be thrown."

"Thrown?" we gasped.

"Yes. That was the only way it could have reached him. The blow came from directly in front of Briffeur. It could only be thrown. Upon the knife handle were the circles such as I had found elsewhere. Someone had scratched them on it in a moment of idleness. It was a trench knife. Doctor King had been to the front; he was the only one directly in front of Briffeur, and the only one who could have thrown it. We had all agreed that Briffeur was killed because he knew who had murdered Slyke, and that the same man murdered them both. There is another proof, also. The only person, outside of the family, that the dog liked was Doctor King. The day we found Slyke dead the dog came in, growled at the rest of us but let King pat him."

The doctor raised his head, his face white save for two red spots in either cheek. His eyes were pools of blood.



"I Never Intended to Do So, God Knows! It All Goes Back Some Time."

ing light. He looked at us wildly for a second, then threw out his hands and in a voice, low at first but growing louder as he continued, he admitted, "Yes, I killed them. I never intended to do so, God knows! It all goes back some time—"

Bartley interrupted him. "To the time when you got mixed up with Slyke and Briffeur, selling whisky?"

"Yes—yes, that was it. It goes back to that." His voice faltered, then he recovered. "I came back from the war, broke. Slyke suggested that I go in with him on running whisky. I had a camp and fast motorboat on Lake Champlain; it was all I did have. He suggested we run the whisky down the lake from Canada to the camp, then bring it on here and hide it in the van. He cheated us again and with us; he cheated us again and again. That's why Briffeur suggested we break into the house and see if he had told the truth about the amount of money he said he got for it. He kept the records of all our sales in his safe. We tried to— you know the rest about the robbery."

His voice trailed off into a whisper. I recalled that he had been shell-shocked, and wondered if he could stand the strain he was undergoing.

"The night I was at Currie's to dinner and met Mr. Bartley it was Slyke who called me up on the phone."

"His voice was shrill now, and I thought he would break down at any moment."

"He said he wished to see me, and I started over here. I ran into Briffeur, who told me that Slyke had sold the rest of the whisky for \$23,000. Well—where was I?" He stopped, confused, and passed his hand over his face.

"Oh, yes—the whisky. I went up to the tower, and he suggested we go out on the balcony—why, I don't know. I asked him what he got for the whisky, and he said \$10,000. I knew he lied, and I told him so. We quarreled, quarreled—All at once, he flashed a revolver on me and said he had a good mind to kill me—he had been drinking."

Again his voice trailed away into silence and his eyes closed. Then he recovered himself with an effort and continued, "Just what happened then, I don't know—don't know! My nerves have been in pieces since I was shell-shocked. We struggled, and I know I shot him. I did as you say. Took him downstairs, undressed him, and put the revolver in his hand. I knew—knew—that most people would think he had killed himself. I was desperately sorry—but I am hardly to blame for his death. My big mistake was calling in Mr. Bartley the next morning. I knew, if I could fool him, I could fool everyone."

He passed; his head sank again into his hands. I saw that Bartley pitted him deeply and his voice was soft and his face grave as he asked, "And Briffeur?"

With an effort the doctor raised his head.

"I was always afraid of that man. He was cruel and treacherous. When I saw him at the inquest I knew that all was over; that he would give me away. And when the lights went out, in a wild rage I threw that knife. I don't know why. Then he almost yelled, 'I wanted peace.'

"But how did you happen to have the knife with you?" Bartley asked.

He thought for a moment. It seemed hard for him to gather himself together enough to answer, "I don't know—oh, yes, I had used it to cut a strap on my car. When I arrived here the day of the inquest, I found it had left it on the floor and I put it in my bag. There was a bag on the table all the time, you remember."

It was easy to see that the doctor was in such a nervous collapse that he could say no more; he slumped down in his chair and closed his eyes. There was some whispered conversation between Roche and Bartley; and then, as if not liking the task, Roche went over and placed his hand on the doctor's shoulder. At his touch the doctor stiffened. He knew too well what it meant. Staking out the hand, he slowly rose and walked, with an effort, to where Bartley stood.

"Mr. Bartley," he said, his voice trembling, "will you shake hands with me? I hear you no ill will. It's a long journey before me."

Into Bartley's eyes came a look of comprehending pity, and even admiration. He grasped his hand and silently the two men, one a murderer, the other the detective that had apprehended him, looked into each other's eyes. Then slowly their hands fell apart and Roche led Doctor King from the room.

None of us spoke until Bartley broke the silence by saying, almost in a whisper, "Poor chap! God alone knows what he has gone through."

Suddenly Currie demanded, "John, what about those slates and that awful ghost? I never was so scared in my life."

For the first time a smile crossed Bartley's face.

"The slates? Why I wrote the messages."

"You! But we washed them," Currie exclaimed.

"Surely, you washed them. That was the whole trick. I wrote those messages with a camel's hair brush in hydrochloric acid with a bit of zinc in it. When that mixture is washed with water, the writing is blotted out until the slate dries again. You remember I always washed one side first; that was the side with the writing on it. Then I let you wash the other; and, of course, that made you sure that there was nothing on the slate. Had you not seen it washed with your own eyes? When the slate dried, the writing simply reappeared."

Miss Potter had been sitting, overcome by what had taken place. But as Bartley's explanation ceased she cried, "Then I did not receive a message from Mr. Slyke?"

"No, Miss Potter," Bartley said apologetically, "you did not. You must forgive me. I knew that King was glib, and I had to make him confess by frightening or startling him. He half believed in spiritualism, and I thought that if I could stage a seance I might make him confess. There was a medium in New York I had once saved from jail and I brought him here with two assistants."

"But the raps?" she questioned.

"Oh, I produced the raps. Almost all of that sort of thing is a fake, you know. You remember that I had you place your hand on the table. Then I rose and turned out the lights. When I came back I slipped, you the

thumb and little finger of my right hand. You thought, of course, that both my hands were being held, they were not. You only held one, while the other was free to give the raps. The medium was tied and gagged, but you can't tie one of those chaps so surely that they cannot speak and move when they want to."

Currie gave a long sigh of disappointment. "Then I never saw a ghost at all?"

"No, Bob," came the answer, "you did not. Everything was staged to lead up to the words you heard that figure say. What you saw was one of the medium's assistants painted with phosphorus so that he would glow in the dark. He was covered with a black velvet bag, made in sections; and another man, wearing black gloves and a mask to make him invisible, removed the sections of the bag one by one. This gave him the appearance of materializing suddenly out of the air. The head was a mask modeled from a photograph of Slyke. When the figure vanished, the second man had simply covered him from head to foot with a black cloth, thus blotting him from your sight. The whole trick has been used again and again by so-called mediums."

Black rose to his feet saying, "Mr. Bartley, you have solved three problems by one solution—the two murders and the robbery."

As Bartley was about to answer the telephone rang and he left the room as if he had anticipated the message. We could hear his cool, low voice say, "Yes, this is Mr. Bartley. Yes, Roche. No, I am not surprised. It's the best thing, after all, that could have happened."

When he returned to us his face was very grave and sad, yet with something of relief in it.

"Roche tells me," he said slowly, "that when he reached the station, King was dead. Suicide."

The news did not startle me. I, too, felt relieved. Bartley was silent a moment, playing with the bag before him on the table. Suddenly he raised his head.

"You know he wished to say good-bye to me. I knew then what he was going to do. I could have had him searched and have prevented it, but it is better so. He has not been himself for months; we will never know all that he has suffered. I am sorry for him. What a great darkness must have covered his life for the last few days! Now it is over."

He was silent again for a moment, and then added, "He took the best way out of the affair."

[THE END.]

NOTICE OF SALE OF STREET IMPROVEMENT BONDS

Notice is hereby given that sealed proposals for the purchase of certain street improvement bonds of the City of Torrance, California, will be received by the Board of Trustees of said City up to the hour of 8 o'clock p.m. on Tuesday, the 28th day of August, 1923, at which time and in the City Hall of said City, all such proposals will be publicly opened, examined and declared by said Board. Said bonds have been issued pursuant to the "Improvement Bond Act of 1915" and are secured by Assessments made to pay the cost of the construction of certain street work on a portion of Arlington Avenue in said City, as fully described in Resolution of Intention No. 46, passed by the Board of Trustees of said City on the 23d day of February, 1922, to which Resolution of Intention reference is hereby expressly made for further particulars. Said Bonds shall be 30 in number, shall be dated August 7, 1923, and bear interest from the 12th day of January, 1923, at the rate of 7% per annum, payable semi-annually. Ten of said bonds are in the amount of \$1,000.00 each, ten of said bonds are in the amount of \$500.00 each, and ten of said bonds are in the amount of \$434.25 each; one \$1,000.00 bond, one \$500.00 bond and one \$434.25 bond mature July 2, 1924; and one \$1,000.00 bond, one \$500.00 bond and one \$434.25 bond mature on the 2d day of July each year thereafter up to and including July 2, 1933.

No bid will be considered for less than par and accrued interest to the date of delivery. All bids shall be filed with the City Clerk on or before the hour fixed for opening such bids.

By order of the Board of Trustees of said City.

Dated at Torrance, California, this 8th day of August, 1923.

ALBERT H. BARTLETT,
(Seal) 24 City Clerk

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ATTEND IOWA PICNIC
Mr. and Mrs. Fred Tourtelotte and Mr. and Mrs. H. M. Bale attended the Iowa picnic at Bixby park last Saturday. The ladies prepared a delicious lunch, with nice napkins and silverware 'n' everything, and then some one stole lunch and all from their machine. The Bales and Tourtelottes dined in a Long Beach cafe.

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